

CLAIMS:

1. A method for collecting location-dependent data in a central data collection point, comprising the steps of:

- 5 - collecting location dependent data from a data source, in a nearby portable communications device;
- transmitting the collected data to a base station of the portable communications device; and
- communicating the collected data along with a location identifier to the
10 data collection point.

2. A method according to claim 1 wherein the location identifier is added to the data by the base station.

15 3. A method according to claim 1 wherein the location identifier is included in the data collected from the data source and transmitted to the base station.

20 4. A method according to claim 1 in which the location identifier is supplied by a location-aware component within the portable communications device.

25 5. A method according to any preceding claim wherein the portable communications device incorporates an environmental sensor as the data source, which provides information relating to environmental conditions in the immediate locality of the portable communications device.

30 6. A method according to claim 5 wherein the environmental sensor provides information representing at least one of: temperature, air pressure, humidity, radiation, air contaminant levels, acoustic noise, magnetic fields, electromagnetic and/or radio signal levels, light levels, pollen count, pheromone levels.

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7. A method according to claim 2 wherein the transmitted data comprises an identifier identifying the portable communications device, sent with the location identifier; and the data is used to determine the position and speed of motion of the portable communications device.

8. A method according to claim 7 wherein the portable communications device is carried in a vehicle, and the collected data is used to derive location, speed and direction information relating to that vehicle.

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9. A method according to claim 8 wherein data collected from numerous portable communications device carried in respective vehicles is used to derive average speed and direction information relating to traffic in a certain location.

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10. A method according to claim 8 or 9 wherein the derived speed and direction data is used to control traffic in the respective location.

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11. A method according to any of claims 1-4 or 7-10 wherein an external data source wirelessly transmits data to the portable communications device.

12. A method according to claim 11 wherein the external data source transmits the data by very short range radio transmission.

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13. A method according to claim 12 wherein the data transmitted by the very short range radio transmission comprises information relating to meter readings.

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14. A method according to any of claims 11-13 in which the transmitted data incorporates an identifier identifying the transmitter, which is used as the location identifier.

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15. A method according to any preceding claim in which the portable communications device is a mobile telephone.

5 16. A method according to claim 4 or any claim dependent on claim 4 wherein the location aware component is a GPS receiver built in to the portable communications device.

10 17. A method according to any preceding claim wherein the data is communicated to the data collection point over a telephone network.

15 18. A method substantially as described herein, with reference to the accompanying drawings.

15 19. A portable communications device for use in a method according to claim 5 or any claim dependent on claim 5, comprising:

20 - a power source;
- an environmental sensor for detecting environmental conditions in the locality of the device, and for providing corresponding data to communications circuitry; and

20 - communications circuitry for transmitting the data to a base station.

25 20. A device according to claim 19 wherein the environmental sensor provides information representing at least one of: temperature, air pressure, humidity, radiation, air contaminant levels, acoustic noise, magnetic fields, electromagnetic and/or radio signal levels, light levels, pollen count, pheromone levels.

30 21. A portable communications device for use in a method according to claim 11 or any claim dependent on claim 11, comprising:

30 - a power source;
- a receiver for receiving data from an external data source, and for providing corresponding data to communications circuitry; and

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- communications circuitry for transmitting the data to a base station.
22. A portable communications device substantially as described herein with reference to the accompanying drawings.